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MARXISM FREELY ELECTED IN CHILE

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8 October 1971

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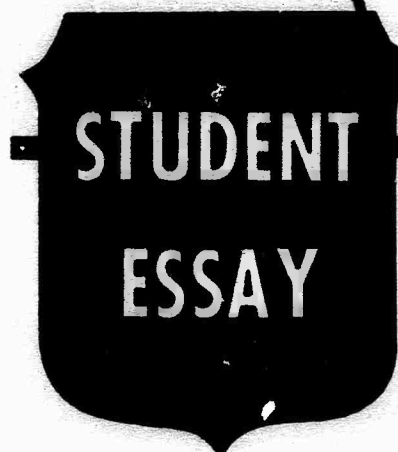
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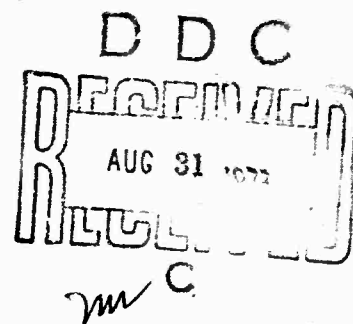
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BY

COLONEL STUART WOOD, JR.

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USAWC RESEARCH ELEMENT
(Essay)

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ABSTRACT

AUTHOR: Stuart Wood Jr, Col, Corps of Engineers

TITLE: Marxism Freely Elected in Chile

FORMAT: Essay

What is the situation in Chile which resulted in a Marxist president being elected by free vote to operate a democracy? The analysis of this question through research of background references and current periodicals reveals that Chile has almost insurmountable obstacles in her path of development. As the Chilean people search for the proper national guidance, they turn from strong man to strong man until their current strong man is an avowed Marxist. How does this impact upon the United States? This study presents the Chilean background, reviews the general situation before the critical 1970 election, covers the election itself, and then discusses the current situation. With these considerations the study reveals that the current status of Chile with a Marxist president is not far different from Chile with a Christian Democrat president. The United States should continue largely as in the past to encourage Chilean development regardless of who is president.

MARXISM FREELY ELECTED IN CHILE

Introduction

By a 1.4 per cent plurality, Dr. Salvador Allende Gossens, a three-time presidential loser, was elected President of Chile. Dr. Allende, supported by the Popular Union Coalition, won out over Jorge Allesandri and Radomiro Tomic mainly due to dissension within the parties supporting Allesandri and Tomic. Because of a narrow plurality, and a Congressional requirement for the winner to have 50 per cent of the popular vote, Congress was required to confirm the election. After much discussion, they did so in October 1970 by giving Allende 153 of the 200 available votes.

On the surface, this appears to be another of Chile's normal relatively trouble-free elections. However, this election is outstanding not only in the Western Hemisphere, but in the entire world in that an avowed Marxist was freely elected as president by the people of a long-standing democratic nation. Not only that, but the men running against Allende in this election were representing democratic parties. Considering this startling fact of a democratic country going to Marxism of its own volition, it is appropriate to ask pertinent questions such as "How?" and "Why?" such a transition took place. To facilitate an understanding of the hows and whys, it is advisable to delve into the background of the country itself and the people therein. An

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analysis of the governmental past will further this understanding. Then a review of the situation before, during and following the election of 1970 will provide sufficient insight so as to assess the impact of this Marxist government upon the United States.

Background

Geography

The country of Chile is some 2600 miles long, bordered by Argentina on the east, the Pacific Ocean on the west, Peru and Bolivia on the north, and the end of the continent at Cape Horn. The easternmost boundary of the country lies in the mighty Andes mountains. Between the Andes and the low coastal range near the Pacific Ocean lies the central valley, some 600 miles long, which climatically compares very favorably with areas of southern California. Long and slender, with an average width of 110 miles, this country contains the world's driest desert in the north as well as areas in the south that receive over 200 inches of rainfall per year. Circumscribed by a lofty mountain range, desert dryness, and cold ocean, Chile is effectively isolated not only from her neighbors but also the remainder of the world. These factors contribute to a self-sufficiency and independence of action among the insular Chileans.

Population

Through family separating forced labor, wars of elimination,

and mixed unions with the European colonizers, the pure Indian of original Chile was assimilated into a raceless people. The Iberian influence of the original settlers was supplemented over the years by Germans, French, Irish, and British. Mestizos, a mixture of Spanish and Indian, now make up approximately 62 per cent of the population. "Culturally the race can be classified as Neo-Latin."¹

This, however, does not explain the great disparity between the rich, or ricos, and the poor, known as rotos, or ragged ones.

Many scholars have pointed out that the North American colonies were populated by Anglo-Saxons who in some measure at least were seeking freedom from oppressed minority status in England. The Spanish conquerors, on the other hand, were concerned with personal rewards....²

The land was seized by the colonizers and allocated by the Spanish government into massive holdings known as fundos which remain the large farms of today. Thus the wealthy received the land from which additional wealth was obtained, further spreading the schism between the ricos and the rotos. Becoming more current:

In the industrial regions, the rotos have long since changed from inquilinos, day laborers without any rights at all, to modern factory workers---The ricos formed a cartel of sorts and made sure that wages were held down and freedom of movement restricted.³

Six out of ten people live in the cities; however, five

¹K. H. Silvert, Chile, Yesterday and Today (1955), p. 15.

²Ibid, p. 38.

³Herbert Wendt, The Red, White and Black Continent (1966), pp. 311, 312.

cities possess almost five of the 9.5 million of Chile's population. Urbanization is largely a result of the peasant farmer leaving the fundo for the city where he hears, and hopes, the pay is better.

Governmental Organization

The present Government is founded upon a constitution which was rewritten in 1925 to eliminate the parliamentary aspects that had been prevalent before that time. It is organized into an Executive, Legislative, and Judicial branch. The Executive branch is formed by the President, with a six year term, and his appointed cabinet consisting of 13 departments. The Legislative branch includes the Senate and Chamber of Deputies. The Senate is made up of 45 members elected for eight year terms. The Chamber of Deputies consists of representatives, supposedly one for every 30,000 people, elected for four year terms. The Judicial branch includes four adjudicative categories. The Supreme Court is made up of 13 members who are all presidential appointees. Next are two categories of courts of appeal, or high courts. Lastly, there is the equivalent of the magistrates' court.

The local government is highly centralized with each of the 25 provinces of Chile headed by Intendente who is appointed by the President. Each province is usually made up of some three or four departments and, again, the Governor of the department is appointed by the President. Within the departments are sub-delegations and districts which also have appointed heads. The only

locally elected officials are the municipal councilmen. With appointees in so many key positions of government, the possibility definitely existed for a determined President to use the system for his own or his party's furtherance.

Governmental History

In 1920 the modern era of Chile's government commenced with the election of Arturo Alessandri Palma. It was also in the early 1920's that communism made its first appearance in Latin America.

Because of the inefficiency of the Radicals in developing a strong appeal to the city worker in the early 1920's, the politically thirsty blue collar worker had no place to go but to the arms of the waiting Communist party.⁴

Following Alessandri's hectic terms in and out of office came Carlos Ibanez del Campo who ruled with a ruthless dictatorship which prospered until the depression in 1931. Following Ibanez's resignation due to riots in the country, the military took over. It was during 1935 that:

....another Communist party, that of Chile, was already preparing to implement the Popular Front strategy newly proclaimed by the Comintern. This new strategy, calling for broad alliances with limited aims, was soon adopted by all the communist parties of the hemisphere.⁵

In 1936 Arturo Alessandri was reelected. He became very

⁴Silvert, p. 107.

⁵Ernest Halperin, Nationalism and Communism in Chile (1965), p. 15.

conservative trying to bring peace out of the chaotic past of Chilean government. During this general era, the Communist party, where and when they found it advantageous, joined forces with the Socialists as part of their latest strategy. The 1938 elections show Pedro Aguirre Cerda elected as a member of the Popular Front (which included the Socialist and Communist parties). Here, for the first time, labor unions played a forceful role in national elections, as they joined with the Popular Front to support Cerda. Chile, after some prodding, joined the World War II Allies in 1943. In 1946, the Communist votes were instrumental in the election of Gabriel Gonzales Videla as President to replace the deceased Juan Antonio Rios, who had likewise replaced the deceased Aguirre Cerda. Thus it is as far back as 1946 that the Communists, who then received three cabinet posts for their efforts, began gaining power in Chilean government. However, because of internal disagreement, the Communists withdrew their backing of Gonzales Videla and turned to support of Ibanez for a second term. Following ex-dictator Ibanez's ineffectual second term as President, Jorge Alessandri Rodriguez, son of Arturo, won the 1958 election over the representative of Communist and Socialist parties, Senator Salvador Allende, by 35,000 votes. Eduardo Frei Montalva, a Christian Democrat, took office in 1964 with an absolute majority of the vote even though there were a million Chileans who voted Marxist against him. In 1966 Frei's party, which had slowed its momentum, lost many important municipal elections to the Communists and Socialists. The 1970 election

followed the trend of the municipal elections and resulted in Dr. Salvador Allende, a three-time loser and a known Marxist, being elected to the Presidency by the slim margin of 39,000 votes.

Before the Election

What was the situation prior to the election in 1970? Politically, the Communist and Socialists had gained strength.

On the left, continuance of FRAP (Popular Action Front) seems to disprove the tradition of disarray and bitter rivalries which have plagued the history of Chilean leftism. Unity has paid handsomely for the two principal partners in the FRAP coalition, for their electoral strength and political influence have risen to new heights during the 1960's.⁶

Socially, the people became more conscious of Chile's underdeveloped condition. The general population evidenced dissatisfaction, this was particularly true of the workers and the youth, and searched for an intellectual group who was ready to lead. "...Socialists and Communists, particularly when working in harmony, frequently command sufficient loyalty among union members to permit them to control union machinery..."⁷ Change was needed and the people were looking for those who could provide such a change. Added to this was the fact that "The Chilean Communist Party is the strongest and best organized communist party in South America."⁸ It could provide the looked-for leadership.

⁶Mario Zanartu, S.J. and John J. Kennedy, Editors, The Overall Development of Chile (1969), p. 181.

⁷Ibid, p. 128.

⁸Halperin, p. 40.

Upon taking office, Eduardo Frei made many glowing promises for betterment of the country, such as: a) Establishment of 100,000 new farms under a new land reform law; b) Disappearance of food shortages; c) Curtailment of inflation; d) Elimination of chaos in higher education; e) Vast increase in Chile's copper output. Great steps were made by the Frei government in trying to live up to these valiant promises with: some 30,000 families being resettled, inflation being cut to only a 17 per cent increase rather than the 42 per cent in effect when Frei took office, a crash program in school construction and teacher training, increased purchase capability of the worker. These improvements were not enough;

...in spite of this impressive start, veteran observers here in Santiago are predicting that Chile's next two years will be more difficult, and more decisive, than the past two. Some of these observers talk of dark days ahead.⁹

A revolutionary situation continued to exist even with the aforementioned improvements. This situation included: a) Insufficient economic development. The growth rate of per capita income was only approximately 1.5 per cent annually. b) Unjust distribution of income. Nine per cent of the people received 50 per cent of the national income while approximately 60 per cent of the people lived bordering poverty. c) Devaluation of currency due to chronic inflation. d) Faltering agriculture.

⁹"Can Chile Show the Way to Rest of Latin America," US News and World Report, (10 July 1967), p. 74.

While the potential is certainly in Chile, agricultural production had only slightly increased, thereby requiring expanding importation. e) Inadequate educational system. Only two per cent of those attending higher level institutes of learning were from workers' families. There was a definite lack of schools and teachers, particularly for the worker classes, irrespective of the above construction and training. About 20 per cent of the people were illiterate. f) Lack of housing. Half of the Chilean population was homeless or lived in vastly inadequate housing. A requirement existed for almost half a million homes. g) Dietary inadequacies. These dietary problems were not only in quantity of food available, but also in nutritional value of that food. A situation existed where 43 per cent of all Chileans were ill-fed. h) Medical inadequacies. Medical problems created an extremely high infant mortality rate and a comparatively short life span with the average Chilean living only approximately 53 years (as compared to the U.S. life expectancy of over 70 years).

What went wrong in Chile? Part of the answer lies in the severe drought which devastated one-third of this long, narrow country. Two years of dry weather killed crops, hurt tourism and forced major layoffs.

But much of the trouble can be traced to Frei's own party, the Christian Democrats. Instead of being a "democratic left", it turned out to be a divided left.

In spite of the President's frequent endorsements of free enterprise, for example, many of his party members joined with Marxists in

demanding collectivization of industry.¹⁰

1970 Election

The stage was set. While President Frei's government had made excellent progress, too much remained to be done. Results were not evident or not accepted by the increasingly militant youth and workers of the nation. Frei probably could have been reelected due to his popularity had he been able to succeed himself, but that was prohibited by the Constitution. Thus, the Christian Democrats nominated Ambassador Radomiro Tomic as their representative. He was opposed by Dr. Allende who represented the Popular Union Coalition which included the Communist and Socialist parties. The confederation of forces which had melded to defeat Allende in 1964 was ruptured in 1970. Ambassador Tomic, in both his urging of closer cooperation with the Socialists and Communists, and his radical campaigning, alienated the more conservative members of the confederation. They shifted support from Tomic to a third candidate, Ex-President Alessandri.

The Christian Democrat who ran in Frei's stead in this election was so lack-luster a campaigner that many voters called him 'Mr. Blah Blah'. Another candidate, former President Jorge Alessandri, at 74, proved too feeble to appeal to many one-time followers.

That left Allende....¹¹

¹⁰"A Latin-American 'Showcase' Where Reforms Went Sour," US News & World Report, (17 March 1969), p. 68.

¹¹"Chile-Another Cuba?" US News & World Report, (21 September 1970), p. 34.

Through a vigorous campaign sponsored by over 8000 political action committees, Allende promised: reorganization of Congress into a single legislative chamber; expropriation and redistribution of the great estates; nationalization of the mines operated by the major foreign companies; the take over of banks, public utilities, communications and transportation; more and better housing and medical care; and renewal of diplomatic relations with Cuba and Communist China.

Official totals of the voting were: Dr. Allende - 1,075,616, Ex-President Alessandri - 1,036,278, and Ambassador Tomic - 824,849. As previously mentioned, this slim plurality required and received congressional ratification.

Since the Election

On the economic front, Chile's raging inflation was decreased when Allende provided a 35 per cent increase in all wages while freezing prices on consumer goods. This obviously provided increased buying power all the way down to the poorest level of Chilean society yet the business man had to foot the bill. Unemployment has become the highest ever. At least nine of Chile's privately owned banks were placed under government control. This hopefully would bring inflationary credit under state control but also provided a vehicle whereby loans could be limited to only those supporting the Marxist government. Anaconda, Kennecott and Cerco Corporations were nationalized. Unfortunately, this has backfired in that the nationalization program inspired numerous

engineers and technicians to leave the mines. Coupled with the drop in copper prices by approximately 50 per cent, the departure of key personnel has drastically reduced the nation's income from the copper industry. "Chile's foreign currency reserves had dropped from \$349 million to about \$200 million in the past nine months. Inflation has begun to soar...."¹²

Socially, approximately 400 large land holdings were expropriated for distribution to the farm worker. This has been further complicated by landgrabs affected by extremists within the Marxist party. The government seemed to ignore such actions and resultant complaints. They do provide a weak denunciation but feel such takeovers further the aim of no private ownership of land.¹³

Diplomatic relations were renewed with Cuba, Red China, and East Germany. Chile is not alone in her recognition of these three; however, this, at the time, was diametrically opposite the views of the United States.

Where Allende's efforts on the behalf of the Chilean people have been admirable as far as the worker is concerned, Chile's financial status is precarious. This is evidenced in part by the rejection by the Export-Import Bank of a Chilean loan request for \$21 million for aircraft purchase. Even so, Allende is well aware

¹²"Chile: Growing Pains," Newsweek, 23 August 1971, p. 34.

¹³Trevor Armbrister, "How Chile Chose Marxism," The Readers Digest, (June 1971), p. 73.

of the importance of maintaining relations with the free world. Although Chile's dollar reserves have about halved and foreign trade has declined drastically, Allende has been careful to retain Chile's credit standing with overseas markets.

Politically, Allende has reaped mixed reviews. In the municipal elections this spring, the Marxist governing party won over 50 per cent of the vote. "Political analysts agreed the strong showing of the Government now gives Allende a priority to move ahead quickly with his sweeping nationalization and radical agrarian reform programs."¹⁴ But reappraisal was in order when five of his 15 Cabinet ministers tendered their resignation. This, however, was mainly due to disagreements within the non-Marxist parties. It did enable Allende to gain strength by reinstating four of the five and replacing the fifth minister with a stronger supporter.

The peaceful existence of Chile was shattered by the assassination of the former Minister of the Interior, Edmundo Perez Zujovic, which followed by eight months the similar assassination of the Chief of Staff of the Chilean Army, Major General Rene Schneider Chereau. Blamed for Schneider's death is the right wing of Chilean politics while LIFE magazine's 16 July 1971 issue states that the MIR, or Revolutionary Left Movement, was responsible for the Perez death. These violent acts, coupled with

¹⁴"Allende's Political Punch Shows in Chile Elections," The SUN, Colorado Springs, (6 April 1971), p. 5.

others since the election, indicate a rising trend which bodes ill for Chile as the restless people seek a solution to Chile's numerous problems.

Impact on the United States

The obvious impact from the above situation is that Chile and the United States are at odds concerning the recognition of Communist Cuba and the nationalization of the American mining interests in Chile. There is the distinct possibility that the Communist take-over of Chile could be repeated in other South American countries. The exporting of subversives throughout the South American continent could and probably will prove a thorn in the side of all other than communistic governments throughout Latin America.

The Soviet Union is even now exploring the possibility of assisting the Chilean fishing fleet with port improvements at Valparaiso. The assistance could likely extend facilities for Soviet naval power on the South American coast. This would provide economic interference with the United States' efforts as well as providing a military base for the expansion of Soviet naval power.

Financially, Chile has assured the United States that it will pay indemnification for the nationalized copper interests. However, the Chilean payment will be less "excess profits" which really leaves Chile in a position of legally paying whatever she

wants for this nationalization of valuable property.

After standing back watching developments in Chile, the United States seems to have arrived at the conclusion that Chile wishes to maintain normal relations. With this in mind, "The United States granted Chile \$5 million in credits for purchases of military equipment.... The United States Navy has leased to Chile a seagoing tug...."¹⁵ Hopefully, this portends smooth relations between the two countries henceforth. "As yet, there has been no substantive cause revealed to generate hostility beyond the differences in political philosophy."¹⁶ The outcome of the 1973 congressional elections will be closely watched to see who obtains control of Congress. If it goes to Marxist control then the Chilean trend will most likely swing even more rapidly into Communist orbit. Hopefully, by Congress remaining with the opposing forces, Chile will retain its democratic ways, even with a Marxist head of state, and relations within the United States will remain calm.

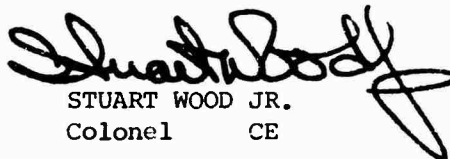
Conclusion

The Chilean experiment in Marxism as directed by President Allende will and has taken Chile on a divergent course from that of the United States. This course must be continually analyzed

¹⁵Tad Szulc, "US Gives Chile Credits for Military Purchases," The New York Times, (30 June 1971), p. 1.

¹⁶"Between the US and Chile, a Bad Diplomatic Climate," The Miami Herald, (18 March 1971), p. 6-A.

throughout the remaining five years of Dr. Allende's office to try wherever possible to insure that the separation between the United States and Chile does not become insurmountable. "Despite the fact, then, that about a third of the Chilean's vote for Marxist candidates, they do not identify such voting behavior with adherence to international communism."¹⁷ The impact on the United States has not been so severe as to render continual cooperation an impossibility. Therefore, in future dealings with Chile, every effort must be made to insure that the mutual suspicions and defensive distrust do not drive each country into a position of no turning back. Hopefully, the United States can assist Chile in bettering her position economically and politically, even with a Marxist President in control, while remaining on the free world's side of the ledger. United States cooperation and assistance must be continued.


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¹⁷Silvert, p. 182.

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